

Downtown Parking Lots Preliminary Investigation

Prepared by

Topology

For

Westfield
Town Council

June 30, 2020

Agenda

- 1 Introduction + Process**
- 2 Study Area Overview**
- 3 Study Area Evaluation**
- 4 Conclusion + Next Steps**


1. Introduction + Process



Topology

- Urban planning and real estate consulting firm
- Hired by Westfield in 2020 to work on redevelopment matters
- History of advancing redevelopment projects across New Jersey in communities including Morristown, South Orange, and Summit

Process: Overall



Initial Resolution: Governing body authorized preliminary investigation to determine if the area qualifies as a **non-condemnation** area in need of redevelopment on March 10, 2020

Due Diligence and Analysis: Research on the condition of the properties in the study area.

Preliminary Investigation: Analysis of study area and recommendation (report submitted May 14, 2020).

Planning Board Review and Recommendation: Town Planning Board recommended property designation on June 1, 2020.

Designation: Governing body accepts, rejects, or modifies recommendation.

Process: Tonight's Report

Site Visits

- Aerial imagery and site inspections:
 - April 19, 2020
 - May 6, 2020

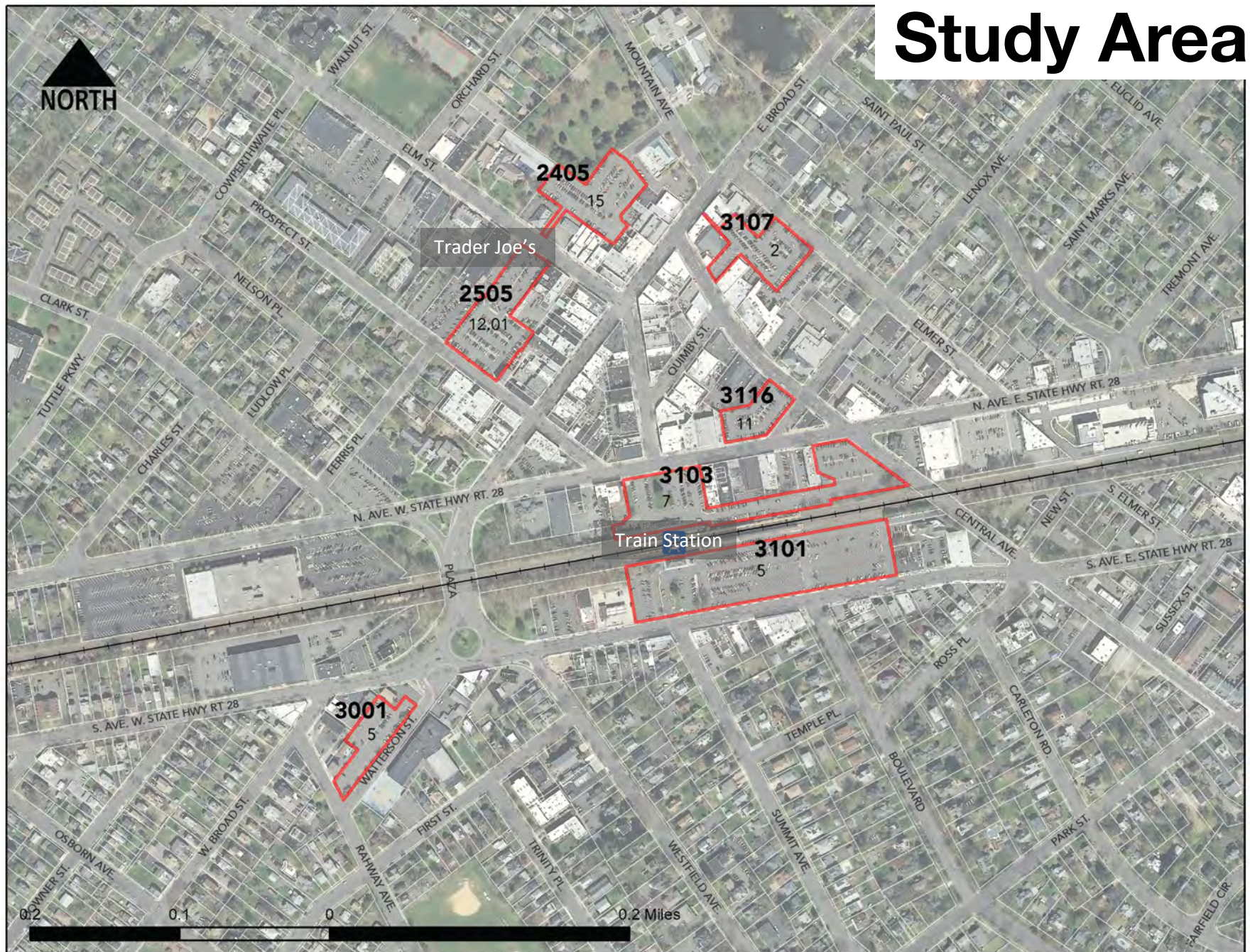
Documents Reviewed:

- Planning + zoning records
- Town Master Plan and Master Plan Reexamination
- Town zoning ordinance
- Municipal tax maps
- Police records
- Tax assessor records including ownership information
- Other planning documents prepared by Westfield stakeholders
- Sanborn maps

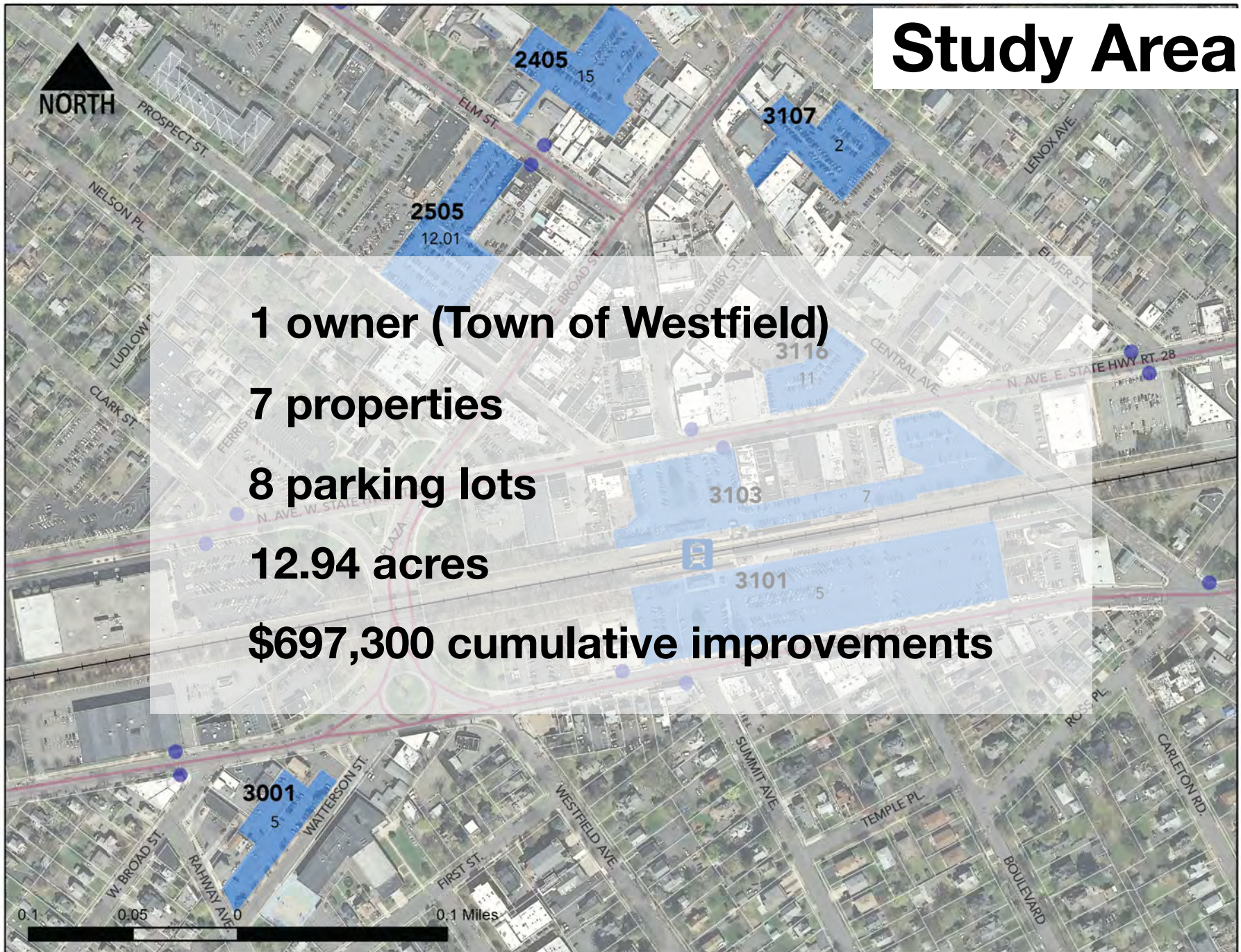
2. Study Area Overview



Study Area



Study Area



SPECIAL
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
TOWN OF WESTFIELD
UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
JUNE, 1996
(updated Dec 2018)



Prior Planning

Downtown Westfield serves as the heartbeat of the community's commercial and social activities. It continues to be envisioned as [a] pedestrian-oriented and mixed-use center; it will offer a variety of housing choices, retail environments, and traditional and non-traditional office employment opportunities. New development will preserve and celebrate the Town's history and architecture and provide housing and destinations for shopping and services, all within an environment of tree-lined streets, pedestrian parks, and plazas.

-2019 Master Plan Reexamination

Prior Planning

*Maintain and enhance the viability of the various business districts by: **encouraging an appropriate mix of land uses that will complement one another** and meet the retail and service needs of the Town; **promoting a desirable visual environment** and preserving the small town atmosphere in the business districts; **providing or requiring the provision of sufficient numbers of parking** and loading spaces in the appropriate locations to serve the needs of the general public as well as the needs of patrons and employees; **promoting a desirable pedestrian environment** in the downtown business district; and **discouraging automobile-only oriented development** in the central business district, including “strip malls.”*

-2002 Master Plan

3. Study Area Evaluation



Area in Need of Redevelopment Criteria

Statutory Analysis (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5)

- a** Substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent buildings
- b** Abandonment of commercial buildings or disrepair rendering them untenable; significant vacancies for two plus years
- c** Vacant or publicly owned land unlikely to be developed with private capital due to location, access or topography
- d** **Dilapidated, obsolescent, faultily arranged or designed building or improvement detrimental to the public safety, health, morals, or welfare.**
- e** Stagnant and unproductive condition of land because of a condition of title or diversity of ownership.

“Area in Need of Redevelopment” Criteria

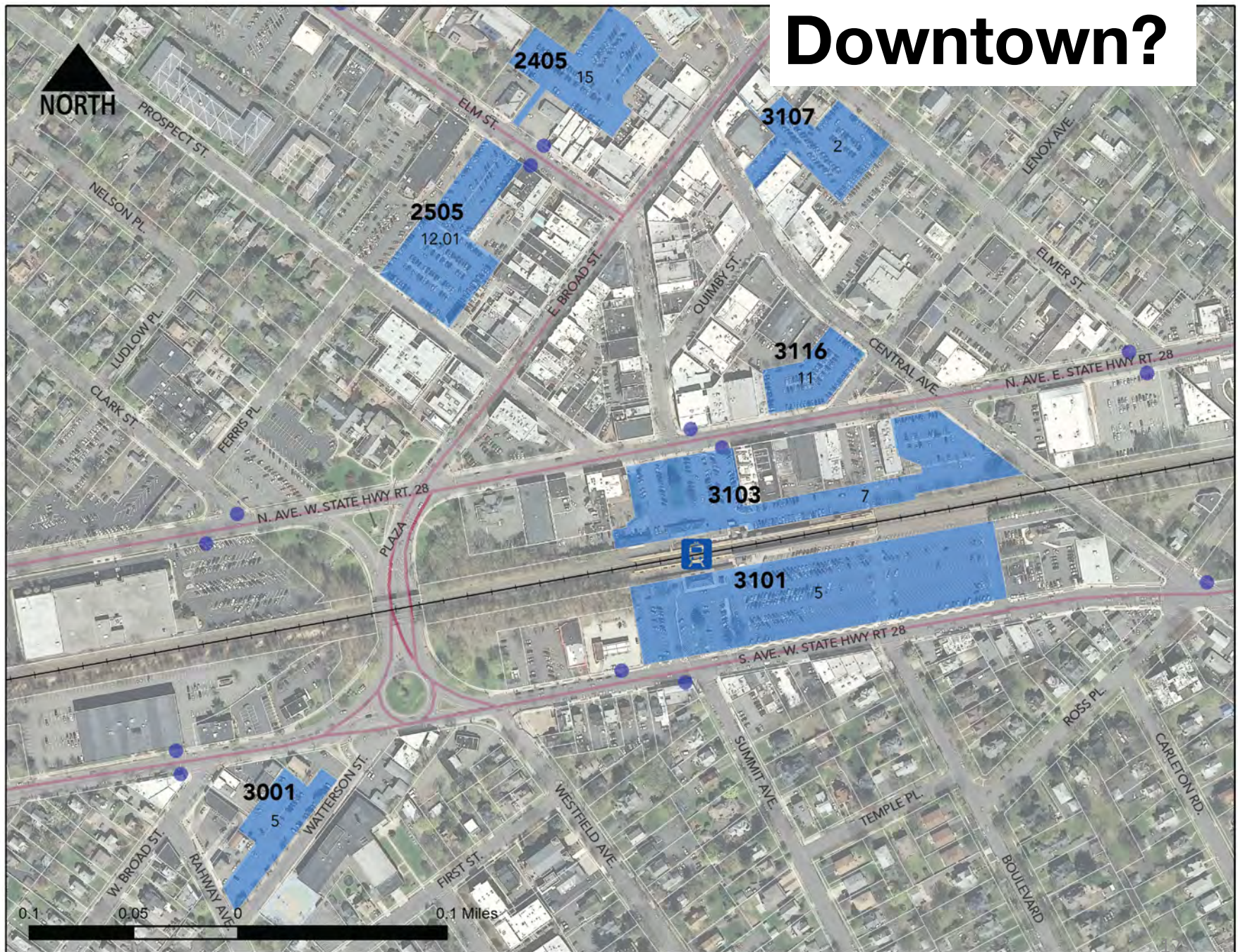
Statutory Analysis (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5 (cont.))

- f** Area of 5+ acres with improvements that have been destroyed by fire or natural disaster
- g** Adopted and approved Urban Enterprise Zones (which may be designated for tax abatements only)
- h** **Designation is consistent with smart growth planning principles**

Surface Parking + Obsolescence

- In Concerned Citizens, Inc. v. Mayor and Council of the Borough of Princeton (Appellate Division, 2004), the Court upheld a finding that a downtown surface parking lot was evidence of obsolescence and qualified as an area in need of redevelopment under criterion D.
- Specific conditions, similar to those found in Westfield, were cited by the Court in Concerned Citizens:
 - Properties were located **downtown** where surface parking represented “yesterday’s solution” in a setting where “structured parking is the new standard.”
 - **Long-term efforts** had been underway to improve the downtown.
 - Parking lots inhibited the types of uses that would fulfill Princeton’s objectives and redevelopment was projected to “serve the **public health, safety, and welfare** of the entire community.”

Downtown?



Long-term efforts?

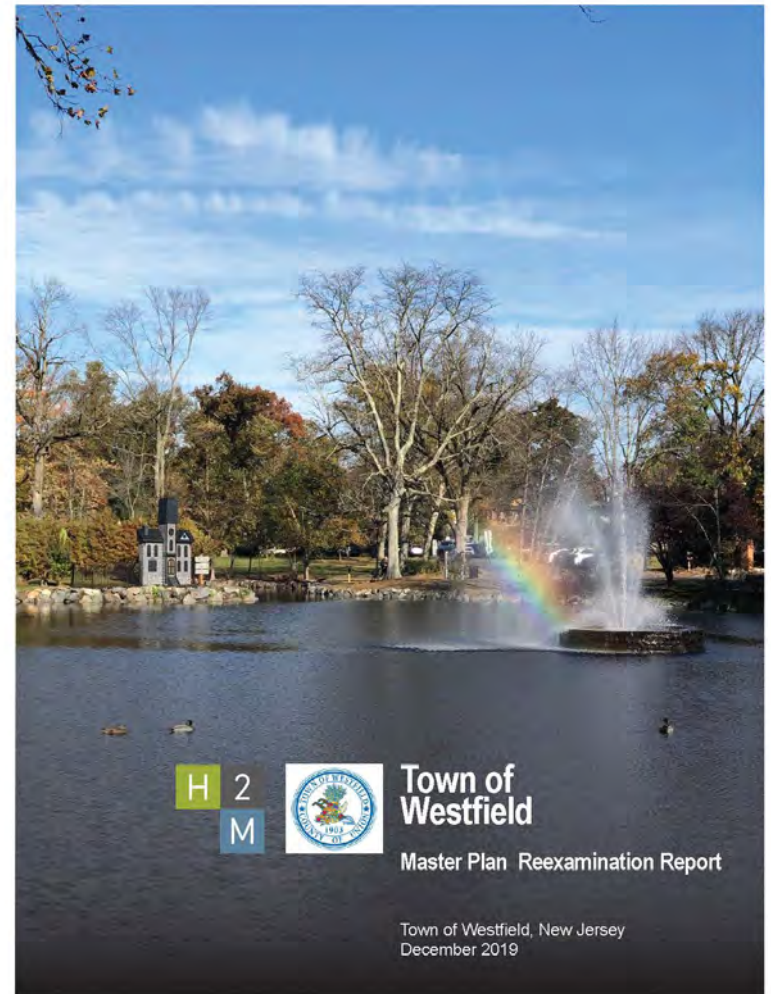
**TOWN OF WESTFIELD
UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

**PLANNING BOARD
MASTER PLAN**

Adopted October 7, 2002

**with Amendments
Appendix B
&
Appendix C**

**Memorializing Resolutions
Appendix D**



Health, safety, welfare?

Inefficiency argument (welfare): Surface parking lots are an inefficient way to provide parking. This comes at the expense of other uses.

Noncontributory argument (welfare): Downtown surface parking lots do not contribute to the functionality of the downtown beyond providing parking, a role they perform inadequately.

Design argument (health, safety, welfare): Surface parking lots exhibit design characteristics that are detrimental to the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

Inefficiency

- Why are they inefficient?
 - Surface lots only have one level of usable area.
 - Irregular dimensions result in high ratios of square foot per space provided.
 - Industry standard is one space per 300-325 square feet
- Why are they detrimental to welfare?
 - Lots leave less land available for other uses.
 - Lots provide insufficient parking inventory.

Noncontributory

- Why are they noncontributory?
 - Their only function is storing vehicles, a role they play inadequately.
 - Lots break up the streetscape, detracting from walkability.
- Why are they detrimental to welfare?
 - Lack of functionality results in inferior assessed value and limited potential tax revenue.
 - Average improvement value per acre in Westfield is \$933,152.
 - Walkability has a positive impact on property values and retail sales.

Design

- What is the design argument?
 - Surface lots exhibit faulty arrangement like wide drive aisles, poor pedestrian infrastructure, and excessive curb cuts that create unsafe environments.
 - Surface lots exhibit excessive lot coverage which creates stormwater issues. They present fewer opportunities for managing stormwater than a development with similar lot coverage.
- Why are they detrimental to health, safety, and welfare?
 - Walkability has a public health and economic development benefit.
 - Dangerous layouts are safety hazards.
 - Poor stormwater management leads to flooding, the movement of trash and pollution, and degradation of water quality.

Surface Parking + Obsolescence

- In Concerned Citizens, Inc. v. Mayor and Council of the Borough of Princeton (Appellate Division, 2004), the Court upheld finding that a downtown surface parking lot qualified as an area in need of redevelopment under criterion D.
- The Court found that surface parking lots in certain circumstances are evidence of obsolescence.
- Specific conditions, similar to those found in Westfield, were cited by the Court in Concerned Citizens:
 - Properties were located **downtown** where surface parking represented “yesterday’s solution” in a setting where “structured parking is the new standard.”
 - **Long-term efforts** had been underway to improve the downtown.
 - Parking lots inhibited the types of uses that would fulfill Princeton’s objectives and redevelopment was projected to “serve the **public health, safety, and welfare** of the entire community.”

Criterion H

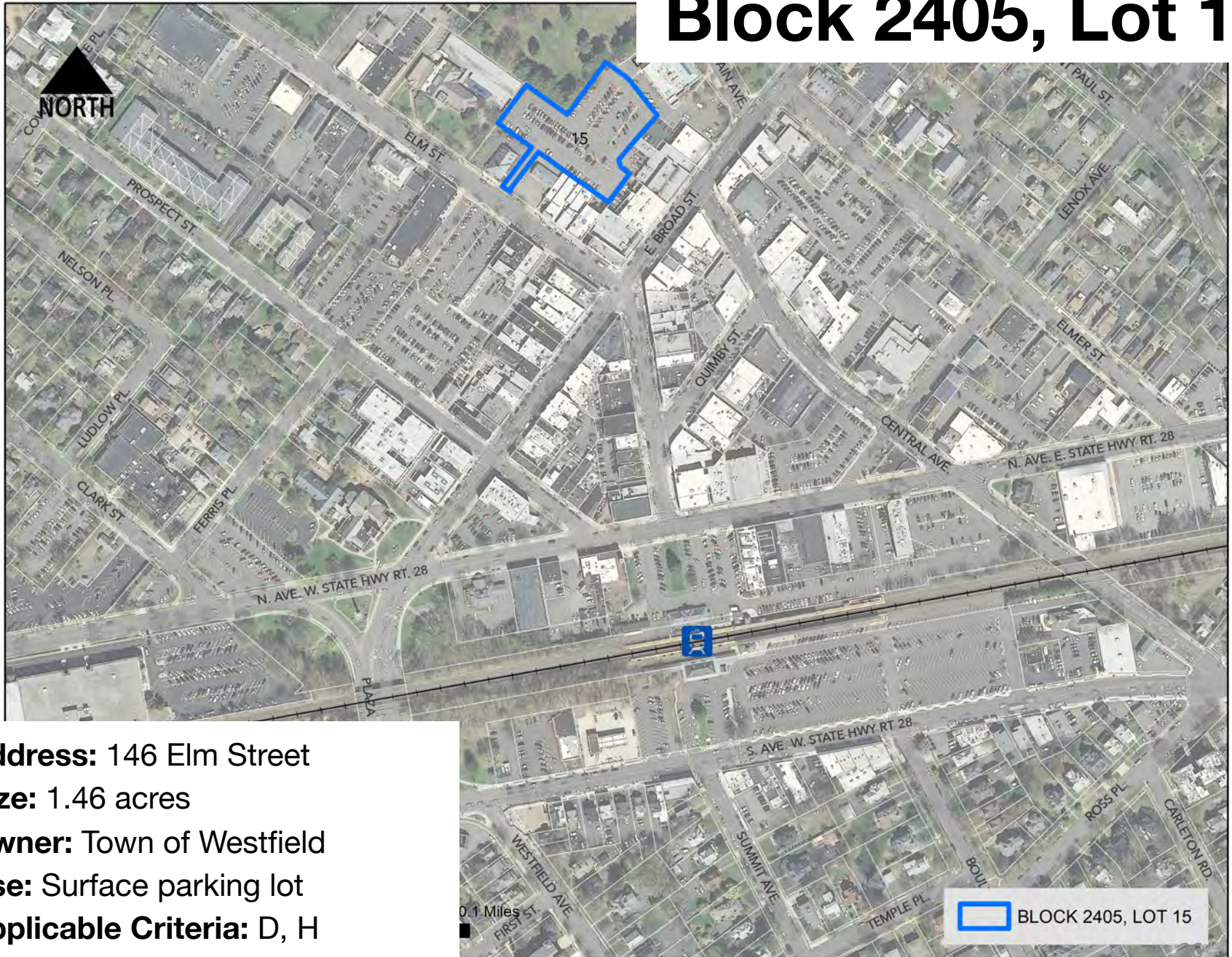
Criterion H: *“the designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.”*

All the properties qualify under Criterion H as designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.

3. Property Evaluation



Block 2405, Lot 15



Address: 146 Elm Street

Size: 1.46 acres

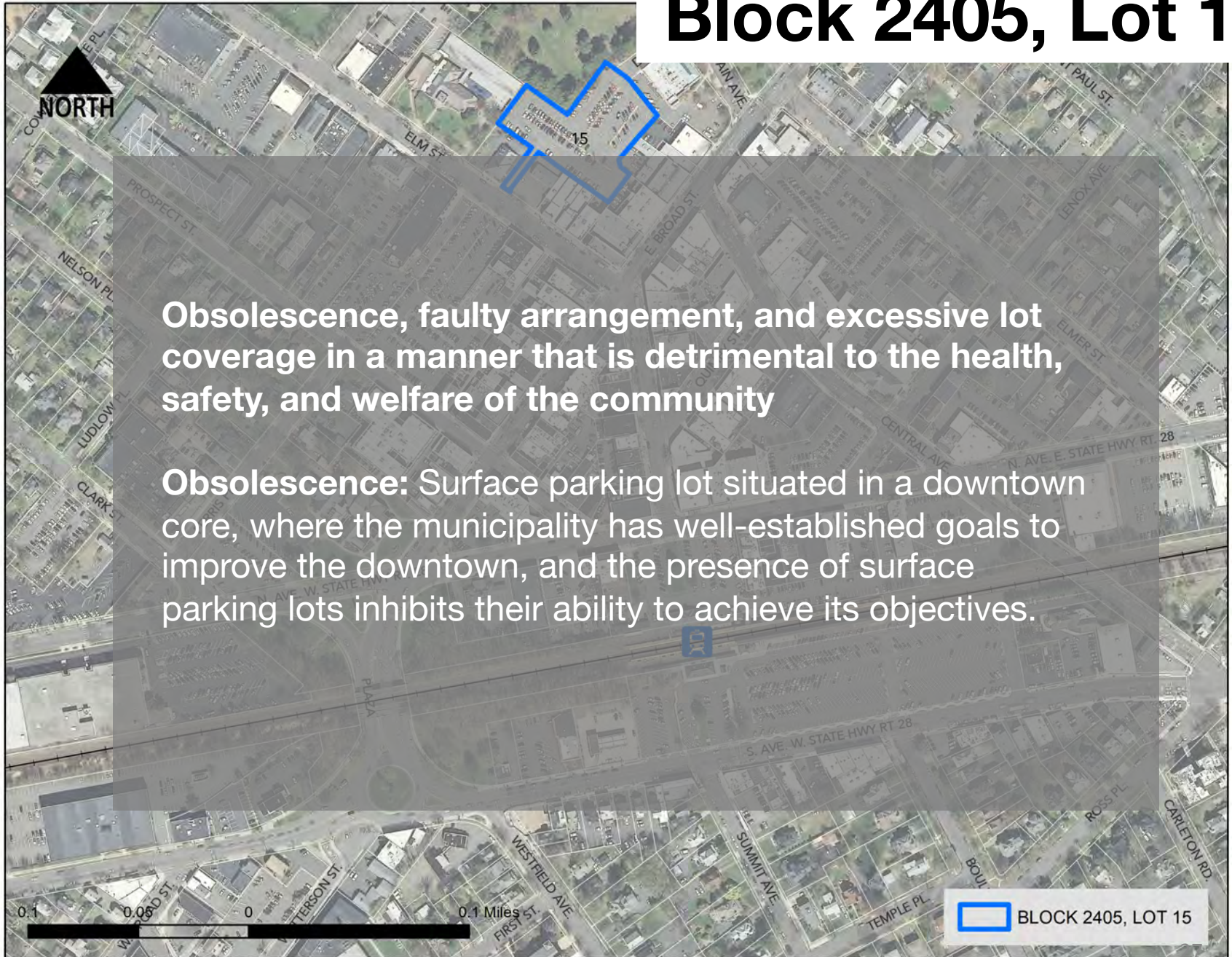
Owner: Town of Westfield

Use: Surface parking lot

Applicable Criteria: D, H

Parking Lot ID: 4

Block 2405, Lot 15



Block 2405, Lot 15

- **Detrimental to health, safety, welfare**
 - **Inefficiency (W)**
 - Single level of parking excludes other potential uses
 - One parking space per 447 square feet of area
 - Inefficiency reflected in density, mixture, and value of nearby uses
 - **Noncontributory (W)**
 - No functional value besides providing 142 spaces
 - Improvement value per acre \$42,465
 - Creates a break in the street wall
 - **Design (H, S, W)**
 - Limited pedestrian infrastructure
 - Wide drive lanes and tight turns
 - Unconventional traffic pattern
 - Excessive lot coverage with negligible pervious areas



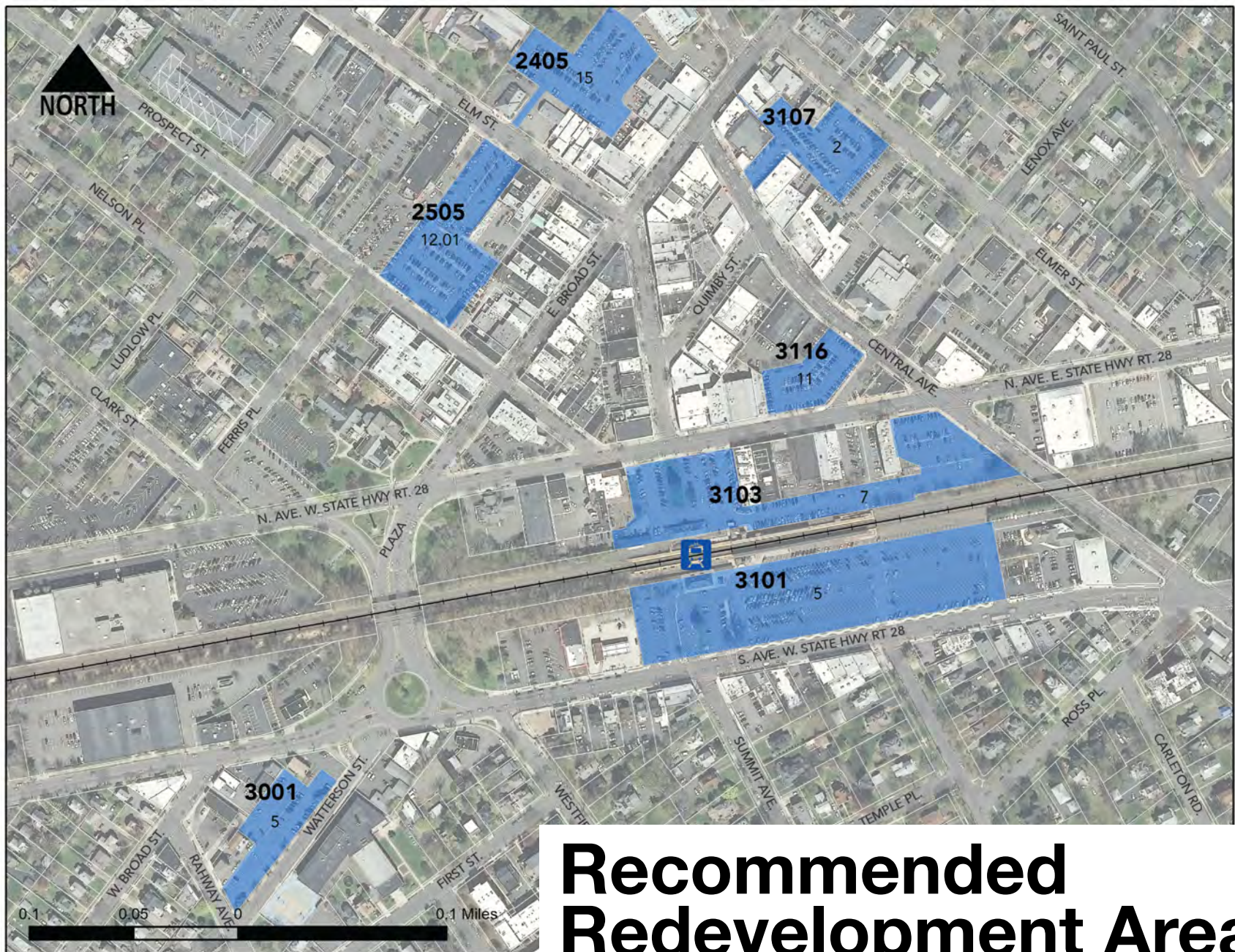
Summary of Findings

- Similar analysis conducted for each individual lot and presented to the Planning Board for their consideration.
- Based on the findings of the report and recommendation of the Planning Board, the Study Area properties qualify as non-condemnation areas in need of redevelopment based on:

Block	Lot	Criteria							
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
2405	15				X				X
2505	12.01				X				X
3001	5				X				X
3101	5				X				X
3103	7				X				X
3107	2				X				X
3116	11				X				X

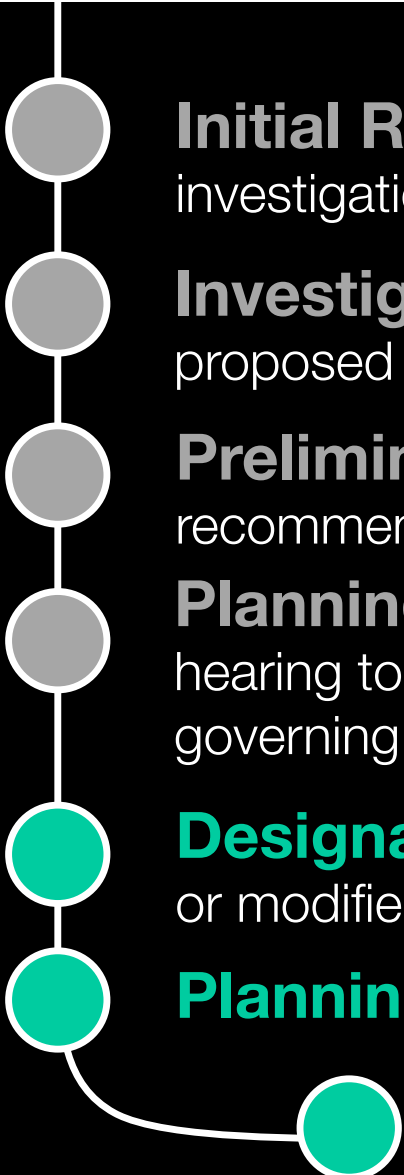
4. Conclusion + Next Steps





Recommended Redevelopment Areas

Next Steps



Initial Resolution: Governing body authorization of preliminary investigation on March 10, 2020.

Investigation Map: Delineates the boundaries of the proposed study area.

Preliminary Investigation: Analysis of study area and recommended course of action.

Planning Board Review: Town Planning Board holds public hearing to review preliminary investigation for recommendation to governing body.

Designation: Governing body resolution that accepts, rejects or modifies recommendations.

Planning: Policy and regulatory framework for redevelopment.

Plan Adoption: Ordinance adopting the Plan as an amendment to Zoning.

An aerial photograph of a city street grid. The image shows a variety of buildings, including multi-story commercial structures and smaller residential-style buildings. There are several large parking lots filled with cars. The streets are paved and have visible lane markings. The overall scene is a dense urban environment.

Thanks for listening!

Questions / Comments?